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Former legislator begins as chief hearing officer for tax court

Brownback-appointed Siegfried still needs full Senate approval

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By [Andy Marso and The Associated Press](#)

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A veteran Kansas House member has given up his seat to take a top staff position at the state court that reviews tax disputes.

Former Rep. Arlen Siegfried began work Tuesday as the chief hearing officer for the Kansas Court of Tax Appeals, the same day the Olathe Republican's resignation from the Legislature was effective.

"It's with more than a twinge of sadness that I leave the Legislature," Siegfried said during a confirmation hearing Monday.

He was appointed to the job by Gov. Sam Brownback, and a Senate committee approved his appointment Monday. Siegfried still must be confirmed by the full Senate next year.

The 66-year-old Siegfried was first elected to the House in 2002, and he was majority leader in 2011 and 2012. He served on the House Taxation Committee for nine years.

"I think it gives me a sound foundation for what I'm nominated for," Siegfried said.

Siegfried ran unsuccessfully for House speaker and was serving as chairman of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee when he gave up his seat.

"It was difficult to hear that Arlen was leaving to serve on the Court of Tax Appeals," said House Speaker Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell, who narrowly defeated Siegfried last year for the leadership post. "However, he will bring a fair hand and an open mind to his new position. I wish him the best and thank him for his years of service in the Legislature."

Rep. Shanti Gandhi, R-Topeka, who serves on the Federal and State Affairs Committee, said Siegfried was a fair-minded consensus-builder who knew when to drop a bit of levity into heavy committee proceedings.

"He was witty and he made everybody smile and laugh instead of just fighting all the time," Gandhi said. "He will be missed a lot."

Other legislative colleagues were similarly effusive in their praise of Siegfried.

“There’s not a person more honest or fair,” said Sen. Rob Olson, R-Olathe, who commuted to Topeka with Siegfried for years and sat next to him when they were both in the House.

Sen. Jeff King, R-Independence, said he and Siegfried often voted similarly but that was not all that drew them together.

“Arlen was a great legislator,” King said. “It’s far more important the way he carried himself.”

While conservative on both fiscal and social issues, Siegfried was well-regarded by many Democratic colleagues as well.

He and Rep. Jan Pauls, D-Hutchinson, co-hosted a weekly morning prayer session during his time in the Legislature.

House Minority Leader Paul Davis, D-Lawrence, said he and Siegfried came into the Legislature at the same time and always got along.

"I have a great deal of respect for Rep. Siegfried," Davis said. "He's an honest man who has been very engaged in a number of issues that the Legislature has debated. While we don't always agree, I always respect his opinions because they're always well-thought out and reasoned. I have no doubt that he will do a very good job on the Court of Tax Appeals."